My first cariboo hunt. London, 1884.

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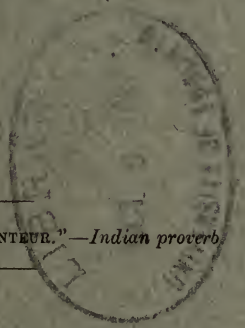

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A. H. Baily & Co., Printers, 15, Nicholas Lane, E.C.

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THERE is no finer sport in the world than "*la chasse au caribou*" when once you know something about it; and if you have the luck to get good men about you, fair hunting weather, and a moderate supply of game, it is exhilarating beyond measure. But in this as in all other sports, beginners have to cut their eye teeth, and the process is not always a pleasant one. My own experience in this respect is doubtless similar to that of many others, but in my first expedition I came across such an eccentric character in Tim Cassidy, the trapper, that a short account of my adventures with him cannot but prove amusing to those who take an interest in cariboo hunting. To make a good hunter a man must possess great patience and perseverance; he must be prepared to go through any amount of hard work and face hardship if necessary, and he may possess all these qualifications and yet fail utterly if he falls into the hands of a Tim Cassidy. Tim was an Irishman, so that he possessed a ready wit which made him the more amusing; but men who have travelled round the world in search of sport will readily admit that they have met him in a more or less aggravated form in all nationalities, and it is the existence of men like him which makes it so difficult for any but old hands who can run a camp for themselves to achieve any marked success.

It is now some years since I paid my first visit to Canada, and finding myself there with nothing to do it occurred to me that I might as well try my hand at cariboo hunting. I had heard much of the sport from some of its enthusiastic votaries, and was so fascinated by their glowing descriptions of the chase and the delights of life in the woods that I determined to plunge into the bush and try my luck for myself. As I was quite ignorant of everything connected with the sport beyond a few ideas that I had picked up in the course of conversation, I went to one of my friends and asked him if he could put me in the way of getting a good man to go out with. "Well," he said, "you are rather late, and the best grounds are all taken up by the old hands who are out already; but I know an old trapper who lives in a good cariboo country, and perhaps you might as well try your luck with him. I expect he could put you in the way of getting sport if he tried." As this appeared to be my best chance I at once put myself in communication with the old trapper, Tim Cassidy by name, and speedily received a reply from him. "Plenty of cariboo down here," he said, "and nobody in the woods—come down at once." This was vastly encouraging, so I at once ordered stores for a month—biscuits, potatoes, tinned meats, tea, tents, and rifles; in fact, I was armed for the chase *cap-à-pie*—"*c'est toujours le mauvais chasseur qui est le mieux gréé*," said an old hunter to me once, and he was quite right. Previous to starting off on my adventures, however, I happened to meet an old sport who had frequently hunted over the country I was going to, so I ventured to ask him what he thought of my prospects. He smiled.

"A man may smile and smile, and be a villain." He was no villain, but there was something very depressing about that smile of his! "So you are going to Tim Cassidy," he said. "Well, you *may* get some sport, but old Cassidy knows nothing about hunting, and it is an awful country to travel. You ought to have plenty of snow to hunt that country, and we have had very little so far." This damped my ardour considerably, but I reflected that sportsmen are the most jealous of human beings, and that possibly he looked upon me as a poacher on his own preserves. Many a good fellow have I known who might give you his last shilling and the coat off his back along with it, but who could never be induced to show a friend the road to his favourite cock-cover. So I determined to persevere, taking the precaution, however, of telegraphing to Cassidy to know if the snow in the woods was deep enough for good hunting. "Plenty of snow, come at once; have two sleighs waiting here for you," was the reply. This seemed sufficiently satisfactory, so that the next day found me *en route* for St. Timoleon, the station at which I was to meet Tim Cassidy. When I stepped out on to the platform there he was awaiting me sure enough. I had been led to expect that he was a pretty rough diamond, but in this respect his appearance surpassed all my expectations, his roughness being such as it baffles my pen to describe. He reminded me forcibly of a picture I had seen in the nursery books of the big bad robber in the "Babes in the Wood," with the addition of a very peculiar twinkle in his left eye, and perhaps it was a strong presentiment on my part that I was myself about to enact the part of a babe in the woods that suggested the comparison.

Nothing daunted, however, I walked up to my hirsute friend and shook hands with him cordially.

"Bedad, sir," said he, "and it's glad I am to see you, so I am, and the sleighs has been waiting for you these two hours; but ye'll come and have a cup o' tay wid me sister now afore we start, just to warm ye up a bit; me sister lives quite handy here."

This invitation I accepted, being somewhat curious to see what Tim's sister could be like, but to my great surprise Tim's sister was as unlike Tim as one human being could be unlike another, and her pleasant face would have quite restored my confidence in her brother had she not made it quite evident in a variety of ways that she looked upon me as a sort of Martin Chuzzlewit starting for Eden. Having discussed this good lady's tea, I went out to have a look at what Tim called his sleighs, and I must confess that when I saw them my heart sank within me. To all appearance they were the oldest sleighs in Canada, and their component parts were only held together by ropes which looked as aged and as rotten as the rest of the turnout. The horses were both dead lame, and nobody would have given them credit for being able to travel a mile.

"Why, Cassidy," I said, "how on earth do you expect to get that horse to go over thirty miles of bad road? it must be at least thirty miles out to your place."

"How am I going to get him to go, is it?" replied Tim, "Bedad, I'll make him go."

With this I had to be satisfied, so I tumbled into the rattle-trap sleigh, and seeing that my friend was somewhat nettled at my allusion to his horse, I considered it advisable to lead the conversation into another channel.

"Any prospect of good sport, Tim?" I asked.

"Spoort?" said Tim, "ye'll have plenty of spoort."

"But are there plenty of cariboo about?" I inquired.

"Is it cariboo, thin?" said Tim; "sure there's hapes upon hapes of them; sure the whole place is clane bate down wid them, like sheep round me barn door."

"Then I suppose you shoot a good many through the winter?" I suggested.

"And why should I be after shootin' the poor bastes that niver did me any harm?" said Tim.

This was such a novel sentiment for a sportsman that I felt completely posed.

"But surely," I said, "you don't mean to tell me that you have never been out in the woods after cariboo."

"Bin out in the woods, is it, thin?" said Tim. "Divil an inch is there in them woods that hasn't seen me tracks; many's the night I've bin in them woods, and ne'er a bite in me stomach neither, afther me traps."

"Why, of course I know you go round your traps," I said; "but were you often out after the cariboo?"

"Well, now," replied Tim, "talkin' of that, did ye ever hear the story of how Paddy O'Rourke stole the widdy Maloney's pig? Sure thin I'll tell it ye; it's a fine story now." And out came the story of the widdy's pig, to which I had no choice but to listen.

"Well, but, Tim," I asked again, determined to get at the truth if possible, "do you really mean to say that you never were out after cariboo?"

"And who was it said I was niver out afther the cariboo, thin, I'd like to know?" replied Tim, "don't I tell ye there's hapes upon hapes of them; sure, now, didn't I see

Mr. McAllister hauling them out of the wood just forninst me house last winter, thirty on 'em in a row. I tell ye the woods is clane bate down wid them. But perhaps it's a moose ye'd like to get."

"You don't mean to say that there are any moose round here?" I asked.

"I could put ye on a moose, anyhow," said Tim.

"Far to go for it?" I inquired.

"Maybe a matter of sixty mile or so, and it's the divil's own country to travel," replied Tim. I'm thinkin' you'd best stick to the cariboo; they're handy, you know."

It was now quite evident that there was no making head or tail of Tim Cassidy. I would have said he was a fool, but that curious twinkle in his left eye was dead against that theory. Perhaps he is a great *chasseur* after all, I said to myself, and is having his little joke. But this seemed still more improbable. Finally I gave it up. It was a bitterly cold windy day, and snowing hard, so I pulled my wraps around me, lay back in the sleigh, and was not sorry when the lame horse pulled up at its owner's door.

The appearance of the farmhouse was a pleasant surprise to me as it was a very decent house for the backwoods, and I got a very comfortable room with a clean looking bed in it. So I sat down by the stove and was making myself as happy as my sad prospects would admit of when a small girl appeared bringing in the supper. First came a boiled goose with onions, then a huge dish of black-puddings, then an immense pot of potatoes, then a gigantic pancake covered with maple sugar, and finally in came Tim himself with the tea. "Why, Cassidy," I said, "you

must think that I've been starved at home, and that I've come here to feed up."

"Sure, sir," said Tim, "it was me wife thought you'd be hungry after your drive; I must interduce ye to me wife, but sure there's no crame for the tay." "Esmeraldy!" he shouted, "Esmeraldy! *apportez crême douce pour Monsieur.*"

"Heavens!" I exclaimed to myself, "Esmeralda in the backwoods! Is it possible that an Esmeralda can have married Tim Cassidy!" But when Esmeralda made her appearance with the *crême douce* my dreams were dispelled. She stood six feet in her stockings, broad-shouldered and muscular, truly a magnificent woman, and when I saw her it became evident to me that in providing my supper she had done unto others as she would they should do unto her. Notwithstanding her superb proportions, however, there could be no doubt that Tim was "boss," as, after saying a few words and smiling benignly on me, she disappeared, and Tim lighted his pipe while I nibbled at the boiled goose. When I had completed my repast, Tim put down his pipe and with a very solemn air he said,

"What do you think of her?"

"Think of whom?" I asked.

"Me wife," replied Tim.

Now I had always been of opinion that to tell a man frankly what you thought of his wife was to tread on very delicate ground, so I said that she appeared to be a very fine woman.

"Bedad, now, and ye may say that," said Tim. "Havn't I seen her carrying three sacks of flour on her back into me barn, and there's ne'er a man hereabout can do the same. But ye see, sir," he added confidentially, "she's

rough. I've done me best to train her, but it ain't much good; and anyhow it wouldn't niver have done to ask a lady to come and live in a hool like this."

That Tim should have failed in his efforts to train his wife was in no way remarkable, as I believe better men have often broken down over the same experiment; but the idea of a lady living with Tim Cassidy either in a hole or anywhere else was so funny that I could not restrain a smile. Tim paid no attention, however, but went on.

"It's a fine state of things, this, in the ould country now, sir," he said.

"I should say it was rather a bad state of things," I replied.

"Thim landlords are havin' a bad time of it now, ain't they," said Tim; "I'm thinkin' I'll sell the ould place here and go back."

"You think you'd get a farm for nothing, eh! Tim?" I inquired.

"Bedad, now, and that's it," said Tim. "I suppose there'll be farms to be had for the askin', and ne'er a rent to pay at all at all."

"The only difficulty is that you might be shot if you took one," I replied.

Tim reflected on this and immediately changed the subject. He was the best hand at changing the subject that I ever met.

"Do ye play cyards?" he asked.

"Well, I sometimes play a game at whist," I said.

"What's whisht?" said Tim. "I asked ye did ye play cyards?"

"Whist is a game at cards," I mildly remarked.

"Ach, man, whisht is no sort of a game at all," replied Tim, quite unabashed. "Do ye play forty-fives? Sure I'll tache ye forty-fives, and me wife 'll come and play wid us."

But the prospect of a game at forty-fives in the backwoods with Tim and Esmeraldy was too much for me, so I told him I was off to bed, and to bed I went.

Next morning I was up early and had a look round. A large snow-covered lake lay at the foot of Cassidy's house, and beyond the lake the round-topped hills, covered with spruce and brushwood, stretched far away into the distance: a wild place truly and well-fitted by nature for a haunt of the wily cariboo. So I got hold of Tim and asked him what he proposed to do.

"Is it going after the cariboo ye'd be to-day, now?" he asked, "sure ye'd better take a rest after your drive yesterday, and it's a divil of a country over there, I can tell you." Then Esmeraldy came forward and held forth at length on the danger of the woods. "*Beaucoup de misère dans les bois*," said she, "*beaucoup de misère, la misère en masse, Monsieur.*" "At any rate," I said to Tim, "you had better get a couple of men and take out the tent and things, and fix up a camp in some good place."

"And what for will ye be putting up a camp at all at all?" said Tim; "there's hapes and hapes of cariboo just across the lake there; ye can go across and shoot your cariboo and git back here at night quite aisy, and it's good travellin' all the way."

As Tim had said about two seconds previously that it was "the divil's own country," I was a good deal puzzled, but, as I found out afterwards, Tim very rarely made two

consecutive statements without the one contradicting the other. Most men who are given to romancing usually make some effort to harmonise their assertions, but Tim rose quite superior to any weakness of this sort. I felt, however, that it was of no use getting angry, so I suggested that if that were the case we might as well cross the lake and try our luck at once.

"Very well, then," said Tim, "I'll get me clothes; Esmeraldy! get me shirt, *donnez chemise et chôse pour tête.*" Tim's French, I may remark, was of the Stratford-at-Bowe sort, but much funnier. Presently Esmeraldy appeared with an immense cotton night-gown and night-cap, which Tim put on over his other clothes. Anything more comical than his appearance in this rig I never saw, and I would have thought that a sight of him would have frightened every cariboo out of the country, but Tim assured me that quite the contrary was the case, and that it was absolutely necessary that Esmeraldy should fit me out in the same style. It certainly would not have taken long to do, as if Esmeraldy had produced one of her own *robes de nuit* it would have been big enough to hide me most effectually—indeed I might have made a tent of it and camped out in it, but I declined absolutely to be made a guy of. "Then divil's the cariboo ye'll see," said Tim, "they'll all whistle away the minute ye put your foot in the woods."

"Well, if that's the state of the case, Tim," I said, "I'll tell you what we'll do. You can take my rifle and go ahead after the cariboo, and I'll follow behind in your tracks with Louis (Louis was his assistant trapper), and when we hear you firing we can follow on, and see how

many you have got." This was such a reasonable proposition that even Tim could not object, so he took off his night-gown and night-cap, stowed them away in his pack, and off we started.

The walk across the lake was pleasant enough, and Tim had very little to say beyond telling me that I had better take the bearings on my compass in case I got lost in the woods; but when we commenced to mount the hill on the other side I found that I had enough to do. The hillside was simply a network of roots, brushwood, and fallen trees, covered with about a foot of snow. There was not enough snow to enable us to use our snow shoes, but quite enough to fill up the holes and crevices and make the going dangerous. What a scramble it was! climbing over the windfalls, tripping over the roots, and tumbling into the holes! I was truly glad when I got to the top of that hill and found myself on what might by comparison be considered level ground. Here Tim halted, pulled out his night-shirt and night-cap, and rigged himself out to his own entire satisfaction.

"Now," said he, "we must put out our pipes; this is just where the bastes are, and if they got a whiff of the pipe, they'd show us their heels." So we put out our pipes, and Tim commenced crawling on all fours like a pointer dog with a pheasant close under his nose. I crawled after him, wondering what on earth it was all about, till we had got over several hundred yards of ground, when I began to get rather tired of the performance and pulled up. "Tim," I said, "what on earth are you up to? There isn't a trace of a cariboo anywhere about. Surely you ought to get on tracks before you go through this performance."

"And what do we want wid the tracks, thin," said Tim; "sure there's hapes and hapes of the bastes here. Whisht now! and don't ye be talking, or ye'll scare them." And on he went again for another quarter of a mile. Suddenly he pulled up, got on his legs, took his pipe out of his pocket and set to work to smoke vigorously. "Heavens! Cassidy," I said, "what are you doing? Won't you scare the cariboo with that pipe of yours?" "Divil a cariboo is there hereabout at all at all," said Tim; "I'm thinking they've gone off to the little lake. There'll be hapes and hapes of them there for sure."

I would have been glad enough now to turn round and go home, but there was no holding Tim. He was bound to go on to his little lake, so off we went again through bush and snow, and an hour's hard work brought us to the lake. "Now just ye stop here," said Tim, "and I'll go on; and when ye hear me whistle ye'll just come on quietly and ye'll see the cariboo." And then down he went on all fours again and crept away into the bush. In about ten minutes he reappeared. "Well," said he, "it's strange now, there's ne'er a cariboo there at all, and haven't I seen 'em there on that lake, gangs of 'em, lapping up the water, sure I thought they'd drain the lake. But we'll just take a turn round here," he added; and on he went again till he came to a steep hill covered with windfalls, down which he began to scramble. The entire absence of any object in this performance was so very palpable that I turned round to Louis, who had been following us quietly, and I asked him if he could make out what the old man was after. "*Je ne sais pas, monsieur,*" said Louis; "*je suppose qu'il fait la chasse au caribou. Mais il n'y en a pas*

par ici; ils se trouvent plus haut sur les côtes s'il y en a." "Well, then," said I, "you had better tell the old man to come back, for I am going home. So Louis shouted to him, and back he came with his white nightcap in one hand and mopping his face with the other.

"What's the good of hunting wid the bush in this state I'd like to know," he exclaimed, seating himself down on a log, "sure there's no snow at all at all. When Mr. McAllister took out them thirty cariboo, wasn't there six feet of snow in the bush? Sure it's no good at all!"

"But Tim" I said, "I telegraphed you before I came down to ask if there was snow enough, and you said there was plenty."

"And isn't there hapes of snow now?" replied Tim without the slightest hesitation. "Bedad now, isn't the hool country covered wid snow; but I think we'll have a cup o'tay," he added; "it's hard work this hunting, anyhow."

So we lighted a small fire, and brewed a cup of tea, which proved wonderfully refreshing; indeed, I think I may say that nobody can have any idea what tea is till he has drunk it as a tired man in the woods. Our repast finished, I told Tim that the sooner we made tracks for home the better. The sun was setting, it was getting very cold, we had a long tramp before us, and my patience was utterly exhausted. But not one inch would Tim stir. There he sat on his log, and absolutely refused to move.

"Is it going home ye are?" he asked. "Well, I'm not going home!"

"But what are you going to do, then?" I asked. "I'll just stop where I am," said Tim. "It'll not be the first

night I've spint in the bush by a long way. I'm not afther going home, anyhow."

"But you have nothing with you to eat," said I. "What are you going to do for breakfast?" "Ah! niver ye mind the purvisions thin;" said Tim, "just ye stop here wid me now,—sure there's Louis and me'll make ye the prettiest camp that ever ye see, and ye'll be comfortabler than in your own bed. Where's the good of going home this time of night?"

I was willing to put up with a good deal by way of gaining experience, but I could not quite face the prospect of spending the night in the bush with Tim for a companion, so turning to Louis I told him to show me the road home, and homeward we went, leaving Tim seated on his log. It is scarcely necessary to add that he arrived at the farm-house about ten minutes after ourselves, having evidently thought over the matter, and decided that the society of Esmeraldy was preferable to that of the cariboo. And so ended my first day's chase. Like the three jovial huntsmen I might say—

> "This huntin' doesn't pay,
> But I've powler't up and down a bit,
> And had a rattlin' day."

It was now quite evident that Mr. Cassidy was a fraud, a gigantic fraud, and that my prospects of sport were absolutely *nil;* but what was I to do with my tents, my provisions, and my elaborate outfit? My first feeling was to pack up the whole thing and return home; but on second thoughts I decided that I would have my tent pitched in the woods, and that I would put in a week in the bush and get some snow-shoeing and exercise at any

rate. Even if I do return without cariboo, I reflected, I am certain to have plenty of companions in misfortune. So I sent for Tim and told him to get the men and set to work to pitch my camp in the woods at once. But Tim wouldn't have it. "Now what for are ye wanting a camp at all?" said he. "Arn't ye comfortable where ye are? Sure there's hapes of cariboo round the place, and ye can go out and get them any day. And it's the divil sleeping in the bush, anyhow; ye're much the best where ye are." "Very well, Tim," I said, "perhaps you are right, and I dare say I *have* had enough of the bush after the run you gave me yesterday, so get out your sleighs and pack up, and I'll be off home again."

But Tim was far too wide awake to let his game slip through his hands so easily, and when he found that there was nothing else for it, he took Louis and another man with him and started off for the woods with my tents and camp equipage, not forgetting to ask me for a bottle of whisky to keep him going during his absence from Esmeraldy.

The same evening when I returned from my afternoon stroll, I found a big broad-shouldered Indian seated by the stove, looking the very picture of misery, and evidently doing his best to get warmed up. He appeared to be almost doubled up by the cold, and I could not refrain from asking him if he was sick. He turned round slowly, looked very hard at me and said, "Hein." It is one of the peculiarities of the noble savage that if you ask him a question, he will almost invariably say "Hein!" with a view, I imagine, to getting plenty of time for reflection before giving his answer.

"Are you well?" I asked again.

"No, me sick, bad cold, got cramps," and he drew his hand across his stomach and pulled a very wry face.

So I turned round to Esmeraldy and asked her whether a little whisky would not be a good thing for him. Esmeraldy smiled and said she thought that it was the very thing that was wanted, and so indeed it was. The Indian's eye brightened perceptibly at the word whisky, and tossing off the glass I gave him undiluted, he straightened up wonderfully and asked for another.

"That do much good," said he, "just leetle more whisky?"

So I gave him "a leetle more," and that completed the cure.

"You go hunt cariboo?" he asked.

"That's what I came for," I replied.

"Me go with you hunt cariboo," said the savage, "get plentee cariboo like that."

"Are you a hunter?" I asked.

"Yes, me Benny, Mr. McAllister Indian, hunt many time with Mr. McAllister."

"Then why arn't you with him?" I inquired.

"Mr. McAllister gone below, hunt with big lord, not want me; you take me, get plentee cariboo."

Here, at any rate, was a ray of light in the darkness. Mr. McAllister was the great sport of the South shore, and if this man had been in the habit of going out with him it was certain that he must be a pretty good man in the woods. So I cross-examined Esmeraldy on the subject, and found that the Indian's statement was correct.

I therefore decided to engage him, and told him that I would send Cassidy over to him to let him know when he was to start.

When Tim Cassidy returned I told him what I had done, and requested him to go over to Benny's house and tell him to be ready to start early next morning; but Tim objected promptly.

"Now what for will ye be engaging Benny?" he asked. "Can't I hunt wid ye meself, and don't I know more about it than any of them savages?"

"Tim," I said, "you know just as much about hunting as you do about the Hebrew grammar, and you'll just be good enough to go over and tell Benny to come at once."

"Did he say he'd come?" asked Tim.

"Of course he did," I replied.

"Then he tould ye a lie," said Tim, "he won't come at all; he'll niver come."

"But he promised me," I said.

"I tell ye he'll niver come," replied Tim.

I now saw that if Tim turned rusty he might lay himself out to prevent Benny joining our party, and so spoil my last chance of sport, so I thought it prudent to soften down a little and try the *suaviter in modo*.

"Well now, Tim," I said, "I am quite sure that you can persuade him well enough if you like. Just you go over and see him, and do your best at any rate."

"Well," said Tim, "may be I could persuade him too, but ye'll have to pay him."

"Why, of course I'll have to pay him," I replied.

"Ye'll have to pay him pretty smart, I mane," said Tim.

I saw that my friend was bent on getting a shave out of the transaction, but it was useless to get angry, so I told him to go over to Benny at once and make the best bargain he could.

"Then ye'll just give me a bottle of whisky to take over wid me," said Tim; "it would be no good at all going to see Benny widout the whisky, sure he'd niver come. And ye'll give me a bottle of your raal good whisky, now won't ye? Sure that stuff ye give me the other day was nothin' but high wines."

Now "the stuff" I had given him the other day was the best I had, so I got another bottle and told him to taste it.

"Now that's fine," said Tim, smacking his lips; "that's real fine."

"Well," said I, "it's the same you got before, at any rate."

"Divil a bit is it the same," said Tim. "Ye don't fool Tim Cassidy like that, I can tell ye;" and with that he went off on his mission. Late that night he came back, looking slightly groggy, and assured me that there would be no trouble at all, as he and the whisky together had been quite enough for Benny.

Next morning Benny turned up in good time, and went off to the camp with Louis and another Canadian, Tim and I following them about half an hour later. It was a dull, misty morning, and snowing slightly, so that when we got on to the lake we could not see the other side. It was not more than a twenty-minutes' walk across, but after going steadily ahead for over quarter of an hour I was surprised to find that there were no signs of our approaching the opposite shore. Tim then asked to look at my

compass, which he examined with great care, but it did not seem to enlighten him much as to our whereabouts.

"I think we'll just go back on our tracks a bit," said he.

"Have you lost your way?" I inquired.

"Not a bit," said Tim, "how would I be losing me way just forninst me own door? but we'll just go back on our tracks a bit."

But when the fog cleared off a little it became quite evident that Tim had got hopelessly adrift, as we found that we had been travelling due west down the lake instead of due south across it. Here was a man who set up to be a trapper losing his way within half a mile of his own front door, as he very correctly put it himself. This made me more than every thankful that I had secured the services of Benny, and I made up my mind that nothing should ever induce me to plunge into the depths of the forest under the guidance of Tim Cassidy.

The next day found us all settled in camp, and knowing that Cassidy was worse than useless, I did my best to persuade him to return to the society of his muscular wife. But he wouldn't stir, and indeed from first to last he stuck to me with the tenacity of an octopus. Benny turned out to be a first-rate man in the woods in every way, always civil and obliging, and equal to any amount of hard work, and now that he was away from the whisky he bore no resemblance to the doubled-up creature that I had seen sitting at the stove a few days previously. I had many a hard tramp through the bush with him, and awful work it was, jumping over windfalls, tumbling into holes, the branches switching into one's eyes and the projecting roots tripping up one's feet. I have been out after cariboo since,

but I have never seen so bad a country as that which Cassidy had selected for our head-quarters. All my hard work was thrown away, however, as we never saw a fresh track; so Benny suggested that he should go off alone for a couple of days and make a long circuit, with a view to finding out where the cariboo had gone. Tim insisted on going with him, and although I felt sure he would spoil the sport if there was any, I was thankful to get rid of him if only for a day; but one day with Benny was quite enough for Tim, and next morning he turned up alone and gave me a most harrowing description of his sufferings the previous night. They had come on fresh tracks and followed all day from dawn to dusk. "Bedad, it was terrible work," said Tim; "and ye see when it came on night, divil a bit would we light a fire or put a match to our pipe for fear of scaring the cariboo. I tell ye it was cowld, and we sat on a log all night and just got together a few bit chips to warm our fingers." Hardship or not, however, it was quite clear that Tim had had enough of it, as he had left Benny to follow the cariboo and returned to the comforts of the camp himself. Benny did not turn up till the following evening, and I confess I was much pleased when he told me that he had got two fine cariboo, one of them a large bull with good horns.

"At any rate," I said, "I will have something to show for my trip, though I can't say that I shot them myself."

"And who is it, thin," broke in Tim, "that's going to tell on ye that ye didn't shoot them, and ye'll niver be such a fool as to tell on yourself, sure*ly*. I suppose, now," he went on, "I suppose ye think that the gintlemen that goes out like this shoots the cariboo themselves, but divil a bit

do they. They just sets in the camp and they ates and they drinks and plays cyards, and ne'er a bit of spoort do they see beyant breaking the ould whisky bottles wid their guns when they're through wid the whisky. Sure now, mightn't ye just as well have made yourself comfortable at me house and let Benny here shoot the bastes for ye, instead of trapesin' and trampin' all round the country for nothing at all at all?"

This was about the longest speech that Tim had made, and its untruthfulness was in exact proportion to its length, his libel on the Canadian cariboo-hunters being entirely devoid of the slightest foundation. But to blame Tim for being untruthful would have been about as reasonable as to find fault with a man for being born deaf and dumb, so I left him alone, and as I had got my cariboo I gave orders to strike camp and return to the farm.

It now occurred to me that before returning home I might as well go and look at the country where Benny killed the cariboo, more especially as he seemed to think that there was another gang not far off. So I told Cassidy to keep on the men and that we would go up there and have a look round.

"And now, Tim," I said, "be sure you bring plenty of provisions. There are four of you, so that your packs won't be heavy, and I have any quantity of pork and stuff here, so bring it along with you, as we may be a few days in the woods again."

"That's all right, sir," said Tim, "it ain't much good being out in the woods widout plenty to ate, is it, sir? We'll just pack up everything there is, and bring it along wid us."

"Very well," I said, "and get all ready to-night so that we can make an early start."

Next morning we were off at daybreak, but before leaving the house I again asked Tim if he had plenty of provisions in the packs. "Hapes and hapes of stuff," said Tim, "more than we'll ate in a month." So on we went, but scarcely had we got into the bush when Tim insisted that Benny was taking the wrong route. Now, one of the peculiarities of the noble savage is that he won't stand talking to; if you thwart him or bully him, he is just as likely as not to walk off and leave you in the bush, and perhaps the next thing you hear of him is that he is away ahead of you driving off the cariboo. So when Tim began to argue, Benny slipped behind him and told him to go ahead. The practical result was that instead of reaching our destination that evening, we were nearly as far away from it as when we started, and it was not till the following afternoon when Benny took the lead that we arrived at our camping ground. Just before getting there we came upon perfectly fresh tracks, and it was certain that there were cariboo not far off, so I was much astonished when I saw Tim building up an immense fire opposite the camp—a regular fifth of November blaze and at least three times as large as there was the slightest necessity for. "Heavens! Cassidy," I said, I thought you told me that a fire like that would scare the cariboo, and you know that we have just passed over fresh tracks."

"Ah! divil a bit will it frighten the bastes now," said Tim; "sure now they like it, I tell ye. Didn't Benny and me light a fire twice as big as that the other night,

when we were just here itself, and didn't Benny kill the cariboo right alongside of us the next mornin'?"

"Hang it all, Cassidy," I said, "that won't do. Didn't you tell me yourself, after you got back that morning, that you had sat on a log all night, with nothing but a few chips to warm your fingers, and that you didn't so much as light a match for fear of scaring the cariboo?"

"Sure now," said Tim, without so much as winking his eye, "I niver said such a thing at all. What would I be saying such a thing as that for? Do ye think I'd tell ye a lie now?"

It appeared to me that he never did anything else, but as there was nothing to be gained by telling him so, I went off with Benny to have a look at the surrounding country, and pick up the fresh tracks that we had come upon. So far from its being the "divil's own country," as Tim had described it on his return from his trip with Benny, it was quite the reverse, and was a most pleasing contrast to the awful spot where that intelligent trapper had pitched our first camp. The bush was comparatively open, with scattering trees and low brushwood, and if there had only been about two to three feet more snow, there would have been good snow-shoeing. A very short walk brought us on the fresh tracks, and after looking at them carefully Benny said that the cariboo were moving very slowly, and that we had a fair chance to follow them. It was too late to go after them that evening, but there was a strong southerly breeze, and as it was certain that they could not have got our wind, I returned to the camp full of hope for the morrow.

On my return to camp I at once told Tim to put up a

few things for us, as we would be off before daybreak, and that we might want some tea and biscuits with us.

"And how will ye be doing that, thin," asked Tim, "when there's neither bite nor sup in the camp. The biscuits and poork is all gone, and there is ne'er a drop o' tay for your breakfast."

I am not given to indulging in violent passions, but I must admit that I now broke down, and I swore at Tim Cassidy as I am quite sure I never swore at any man before or since. I am not sure that I did not cock my rifle at him. At any rate, I frightened him, as he started off post-haste and was back at the camp with provisions within twenty-four hours. He had to travel all night to accomplish the feat, and it was the only bit of decent work I ever got out of him. I then started off with Benny on the tracks. A whole day had been lost, and it was a very forlorn hope, but I was anxious to make an effort so long as there was a remote chance of doing something. We had not got a mile beyond the camp when we came on the spot where the cariboo had lain down the day before. Benny looked at me and said, "If we start yesterday morning, got cariboo sure."

"It is no use thinking what we might have done if we had started yesterday morning, Benny," I said; "the question is, Shall we go on now?"

"Yes, go on," said Benny, "cariboo go slow, *pas farouche*, but must camp out to-night."

So on we went, and we camped out that night and the next night, and yet another night. We made long circuits so as to keep off the wind, fearing that the cariboo might get our scent, and we travelled on as fast as the bad state

of the bush would permit. To make things worse the weather turned mild, and the snow became soft, and at every step we sank deep into it. As we dragged our feet out of the holes, the snow-shoes got covered with heavy wet snow, which we had to get rid of by knocking them against the stumps as we ploughed along. It was like walking with a ten-pound shot attached to one's legs, and the treadmill must be easy work by comparison. Truly it was "*misère en masse.*" Should anybody wish to understand the meaning of the word "*misère,*" let him tramp through the bush till he is weary and worn out, and then, with his clothes wet through both inside and out, let him endeavour to roast himself dry at a bush fire with the smoke driving into his eyes till they smart with pain. And then let him try to snatch a moment's repose during the long hours of night with his half-dried clothes upon him, his head reposing on a block of wood, and his bed a few sapin branches stretched on the snow. All this I endured, but it was all of no use. There was so little snow in the bush that we could not get on any pace, and it was ten to one on the cariboo, and any odds against ourselves. So I gave up the contest and returned home, firmly convinced that if I had not seen any cariboo, I had at any rate laid in a store of experience for the future.

The last I saw of Tim Cassidy was when he came to see me off at the railway station, at St. Timoleon.

"Sir," said he, "I hope when ye git up to town ye won't destroy me charackter entirely wid me friends up there."

"Tim," said I, "I have now passed more than three weeks in your society, and I have entirely failed to discover that you have any character to destroy."

And so we parted. Whether he was most fool or rogue I never could make out, but I am quite certain that I never met a man either before or since who combined the attributes of both characters in such absolute perfection.

H. S. S.

(Stanley Smith?)

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